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## Airborne Laser prepares for flight



WICHITA, Kan. - The first Airborne Laser (ABL), a highly altered Boeing 747-400 series freighter, is ready for airworthiness testing following a 2-1/2 -year modification program at Boeing's Wichita, Kan., facility. Shown where the modification work was done, complete with its distinctive 11,500-pound nose turret, the aircraft will be tested to prove it can still fly like a 747 despite the structural changes. Once those tests are completed this summer, the aircraft will be flown to Edwards Air Force Base, Calif., where its megawatt-class laser system and unique optical components will be installed and tested. The testing is scheduled to culminate with the shootdown of a ballistic missile in December 2004. (Air Force photo)